



**Representative
Kathy Haigh**

35th District

**For questions
or comments:**

**Representative
Kathy Haigh**

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State Government Operations &
Accountability (*chair*)

Appropriations

Education

Joint Committee on Veterans
and Military Affairs

Joint Legislative Audit and
Review Committee (JLARC)

35th District News and Notes



Dear Friends –

Your Legislature adjourned on time this year, with no need for a special session. To wrap up our work in the allotted time during a budget year is very unusual. As far as I know, it has only been accomplished a time or two since Washington became a state back in 1889.

Of course, speed isn't everything. The criteria that really matter to people I talk to in the 35th district are more significant:

- Did we do our best to improve Washington's schools?
- Were we committed to building a stronger economy, where good jobs are plentiful and the future is bright?
- Did we work to make quality health care affordable and accessible to all?
- Were we respectful of the families, individuals and businesses whose taxes pay such a substantial part of our state's operating expenses?
- Did we strive to find real solutions for real problems, rejecting political ideology in favor of common sense?
- Finally, did we leave the state in better condition than when we arrived in Olympia back in January?

These are the standards that matter. And using them as our benchmarks, I believe this was a good session for the people and future of Washington. This summary is intended to give you a snapshot of what we did, why we did it, and what it could mean to you. For more information on these or other issues, please contact my office. As always, I'm honored by the opportunity to work for you as your state representative.

Sincerely,

Kathy Haigh
State Representative



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Holding Government Accountable – Restoring Public Trust

On May 11, 2005, Gov. Gregoire signed House Bill 1064, giving the state auditor the power, and the responsibility, to conduct performance audits of state agencies. This bill has been one of my top priorities for many years, and this session we were able to pass it with a strong majority.

Taxpayers want evidence that their money is being spent wisely. Lawmakers want assurances that the programs and agencies they fund are doing what they're intended to do. And state workers, whether they work as State Patrol officers or custodians, food inspectors or computer technicians, want people to know that they work hard, do good jobs, and deserve the respect of their fellow citizens.

Performance audits can help with all these, and more. They can help us learn whether legislative and regulatory goals are being met. They'll show us the real cost and benefits of a given activity, and they'll ferret out the inefficiencies that can needlessly drain tax dollars.

Performance audits can help restore citizens' confidence in their government. Our state auditor was among the bill's supporters; his auditors will evaluate an agency's efficiency, effectiveness and customer satisfaction. Agencies will be required to improve in areas that were identified as needing more work or improvement.

We'll discover when an agency or program is simply no longer justified. And, we'll learn which government agencies are well-run and performing vital public services every day.

Performance audits are the centerpiece of our government-accountability package this session, but they are not the only piece. Various House and Senate bills signed by the governor are designed to:

- Improve state agency performance by requiring Quality Management techniques;

- Institutionalize Priorities of Government (POG), the budgeting principle that recognizes limited public resources must be allocated and used as effectively and efficiently as possible; and
- Install the state auditor on the Transportation Audit Board and allow him to conduct performance audits on transportation agencies and projects.

Honoring Veterans

As a member of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, I've worked for many years to develop legislation and government policies that do right by the men and women who have served in our armed forces, and those who are currently serving. This session we produced several new laws that I am proud to have sponsored and/or supported.

- HB 1174 establishes college and university tuition assistance and waivers for countless veterans and National Guard members and, in many cases, their families or survivors.
- HB 1189 directs county governments to establish veterans' assistance programs to address the needs of local indigent veterans and their families.
- HB 1307 extends eligibility for state veterans' benefits to merchant marines who served on military vessels in combat zones during the Korean and Vietnam wars.
- HB 1509 creates a new property-tax relief program for retired widows or widowers of Washington's wartime veterans.

The new Retsil nursing home was officially opened this year. This state-of-the-art facility is a wonderful investment the state of Washington made to serve the needs of veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs deserves great credit for their commitment and accomplishment. On the federal level we face a continual struggle to maintain sufficient funding for health care for veterans. To send men and women to war yet not provide adequate resources to ease their pain and suffering as best we can is unconscionable.

I will work hard to raise awareness of the issue and urge our congressional delegates to make veterans' issues a top priority for funding.



I was honored to stand with Washington veterans as Gov. Gregoire signed my bill, HB 1307, into law in May of this year.

Education: Our Paramount Duty

The state constitution doesn't beat around the bush: Education is the state's "paramount duty." Education is the issue that drew me into public service, and I'm happy to report that this session was very promising for our students, parents and educators.

This year, the Legislature:

- Invested nearly 10 percent more in K-12 education than during the previous biennium;
- Funded the voter-approved education initiatives, I-728 and I-732. These were designed to increase student learning (I-728) and provide overdue salary increases for teachers (I-732);
- Created the Council on Early Learning to improve the way we educate our youngest students;
- Worked to boost Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores by increasing our commitment to the very successful Learning Assistance Program (LAP);
- Reconstituted and reinvigorated the State Board of Education by abolishing the Academic Achievement and Accountability Commission and vesting its authority and responsibilities with the Board; and



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- Directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop programs to reduce the dropout rate.

The most significant thing we did for education was authorize a thorough investigation of the way we fund our schools. Ever since my days as a school-board director, I've believed there was a better, more efficient and effective way to determine how we spend \$13 billion every two years. Essentially, our current method is based on raw numbers of students. I've long advocated a formula based instead on goals, performance and results, one that takes important variables into account and provides more funds where they are truly needed.

I've worked on this bill for years and this year it finally became a reality. We've created a Governor's Council that will return its recommendations to the Legislature next November and a year from now.

Health Care

There's no question that skyrocketing malpractice-insurance premiums put a squeeze on doctors throughout the U.S. Insurers put the blame on patients who bring what they call "frivolous lawsuits," and on their attorneys, even though study after study demonstrate that malpractice premiums have not gone down in states that have severely restricted the rights of citizens to sue for medical malpractice. At the other extreme, patient-advocacy groups and trial lawyers accuse insurance companies of outright greed.

Next fall, Washington voters will pass judgment on initiatives reflecting each of these two opposing positions. To offer citizens some balance between these two dueling initiatives, the House passed common-sense legislation offering a third choice that put patients first, discouraged unnecessary lawsuits, and emphasized patient safety. Unfortunately, the Senate did not act on our plan.

Still, we made positive strides this session by passing several key health-care laws. Your Legislature succeeded in passing legislation to make prescription medicine more affordable; end insurance discrimination against mental-illness sufferers; use cost-effective methods of

fighting chemical dependency; reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program for nearly 70,000 otherwise uninsured Washington children; and shore up funding for vital public health services throughout the state.

Election Reform

A casualty of last fall's election fiasco was the confidence with which Washington voters had long viewed our state's election process. Chairing the House State Government Operations and Accountability Committee put election reform squarely in my lap this year, a challenge I took very seriously. After working closely with countless concerned citizens, Secretary of State Sam Reed, election officials from throughout the state, and legislative leaders of both parties, I'm happy to report that we passed several good pieces of legislation to improve elections and help voters regain confidence in our elections process.

Our key election-reform bills guarantee that:

- The Secretary of State will regularly audit county elections offices to assure compliance with all election laws;
- Every vote cast on an electronic voting machine will have a paper trail;
- Counties will have the option to convert to vote-by-mail elections;
- We're going to strengthen our statewide voter-registration database, clarify registration requirements, and increase penalties for fraudulent registrants;
- Military voters and civilians out of state will find voting by mail easier;
- ID will be required of every voter at a polling place. Voters without ID can only cast provisional ballots;
- Anyone attempting to vote twice will face severe penalties;
- Voters whose signatures are problematic will be phoned by county election officers to verify their identity and right to vote; and
- Election workers will receive training to become competent at verifying signatures.

Capital Budget

The capital budget seems to escape the controversy that swirls around the state's operating and transportation budgets every two years. That's not surprising; the capital budget, also called the construction budget, immediately translates into jobs, new and improved buildings, reinvigorated local economies, and enhanced civic pride – without hiking taxes.

The capital budget this year invests more than \$50 million here in the 35th district – and throughout the state, it pours a record \$600 million into school construction alone, potentially easing the local property-tax bite for countless taxpayers. Here at home, several million of our dollars are earmarked for the Hood Canal cleanup spearheaded by my seatmate, Rep. Bill Eickmeyer. I'll let him detail those hard-won investments in his own newsletter, but just a small sampling of the other budget highlights include:

- Belfair community sewer system — \$16 million
- Admiral Theatre, Bremerton — \$180,000
- Squaxin Island Tribal Museum Library and Research Center, Shelton — \$210,539
- Pacific Northwest Salmon Center, Belfair — \$1,000,000
- Washington and Mission Creek corrections centers, expansion, renovation, repair — \$19,591,662
- Kitsap Home Builders Foundation: low-impact development standards implementation — \$182,550
- Hoodsport, Eells Spring and Sat-sop Springs hatchery projects — \$1,706,000
- Stavis natural resources conservation areas / Kitsap Forest natural area preserve — \$2,669,703
- Belfair Park, Little Mission Creek bridge — \$345,000
- Kennedy Creek natural area preserve — \$664,807

For additional details on the capital budget, please visit my website: <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/haigh/>. A final word on the capital budget: A re-



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cent study conducted by the University of Washington says every million dollars of construction spending creates 31 new jobs, which means this year's capital budget could provide work for hundreds of 35th-district residents. All in all, I am pleased with the funding for our district.

Transportation: Washington at a Crossroads

Most people recognize that decades of neglect have given us thousands of miles of dangerous, inadequate roadways and hundreds of equally dangerous, crumbling bridges. There is less agreement about what we as a state should do about the situation. Mostly, the disagreement revolves around the word "tax." To finance Washington's record-breaking \$8.5 billion investment in transportation, a bipartisan majority in the Legislature – Republicans and Democrats alike, in both the House and the Senate – voted to increase the per-gallon gas tax by 9.5 cents over the next four years: three cents this year and next year, then two cents and a cent and a half in years three and four.

We also built in a number of safeguards to help taxpayers know that their

investment is being handled efficiently; chief among these is our directive that the state auditor regularly conduct performance audits on transportation projects.

The new revenue will allow us to renew and repair our inadequate transportation infrastructure from border to border. Our economy, our quality of life, the safety of everyone who uses our highways, and our future as a viable state all depend on our willingness to tackle these jobs.

Our 35th district, which includes all of Mason County and parts of Grays Harbor, Kitsap and Thurston counties, contains many miles of antiquated and dangerous roads. Our cities and counties simply do not have the resources to address these problems. With that in mind, I negotiated throughout the session to have nearly \$100 million in the new transportation budget earmarked for safety improvements in our district.

Thanks to the new Transportation Act:

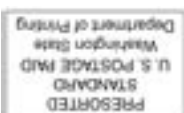
- We'll be able to install median barriers, left-turn lanes and other safety improvements on stretches of highway where today it seems a month rarely goes by without a fatal head-on collision – with an emphasis on

Highway 3 from Shelton all the way to Bremerton.

- We're going to widen dangerously narrow roads throughout the four-county district.
- We'll use the increased revenue to build overpasses and otherwise improve several deadly intersections – including the perilous crossroads of Highway 3 and Route 101 at Mill Creek, just outside Shelton, with the construction of a northbound on-ramp on 101.
- We'll repave deteriorating roadways.
- We'll rebuild bridges that have grown inadequate for the volume and weight of increasing vehicle traffic over the years.
- We'll strengthen the economies of our cities and rural communities by improving freight mobility and reducing commuting times. One good example is the plan to build a Belfair bypass to relieve the terrible congestion on Highway 3 through the middle of town.

(There are 37 separate transportation projects slated for the 35th district. For a complete list, visit my web page at <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/haigh/> or contact my office.)

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